

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 INT-05

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FM AMEMBASSY NIAMEY

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 881

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NIAMEY 3229

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, EMIN, EARL, NG

SUBJ: MIN OF MINES MOUNKEILA AROUNA TO VISIT CONOCO INSTALLATIONS
IN U.S.

1. WE LEARNED JULY 24 IN CONFIDENCE THAT MIN OF MINES
MOUNKEILA AROUNA HAS ACCEPTED A CONOCO INVITATION TO VISIT
COMPANY INSTALLATIONS IN U.S. BEGINNING O/A AUGUST 4.
PARTY TO INCLUDE MOUNKEILA, ONAREM(NIGERS NATIONAL
URANIUM COMPANY) DIRECTOR SANI KOUTOUBI, SEC GEN OF MINES
SORRY BOUBAKAR, CONOCO REP DESMIER AND POSSIBLY MIN OF
POSTS AND TELECOMMUNICATIONS ALOU HAROUNA (ONAREM BOARD
MEMBER). TWO WEEK TRIP TO INCLUDE VISITS TO COMPANY
HEADQUARTERS IN STAMFORD, CONN. AND MINING SITES IN TEXAS
AND ARIZONA.

2. THIS VISIT IS PARTICULARLY INTERESTING IN THREE RESPECTS.
FIRST, VISIT COMES AT CRITICAL JUNCTURE IN THE CONOCO-
ONAREM-COGEMA (FRANCES
ATOMIC ENERGY COMMISSION CEA OVERSEAS MINING SUBSIDIARY)
NEGOTIATIONS ON THE SELECTION OF EITHER CONOCO OR COGEMA
AS IMOURAREN MINE OPERATOR. CONOCO HOPES TO IMPRESS UPON
THEIR NIGERIEN VISITORS THE NECESSITY OF SELECTING AN
OPERATOR WITH PROVEN LARGE OPEN-PIT MINING EXPERIENCE
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AND/OR CONTACTS. WITH THE SIZEABLE INVESTMENT
THAT IMOURAREN REPRESENTS, CONOCO IS WORKING HARD TO
ASSURE THEY ARE AWARDED THE OPERATORSHIP. THIS VISIT MAY
DO THE TRICK.

3. SECONDLY, THE VISIT COMES ON THE HEELS OF BOTH MOUNKEILAS
MAY TRIP TO FRANCE WHERE HE INSPECTED CEA FACILITIES AND

PRESIDENT KOUNTCHES JUNE MEETING WITH CEA OFFICIALS AFTER THE PARIS FRANCOPHONE SUMMIT. WITH THE GON'S DESIRE TO PURSUE AN INCREASINGLY INDEPENDEND (READ REDUCED FRENCH ORIENTED) URANIUM POLICY, THIS TRIP SERVES NICELY TO PUT FRENCH ON NOTICE THAT GON IS INTERESTED IN LISTENING TO ALL MINING PARTNERS.

4. THIRDLY, TRIP PRELIMINARIES HAVE BEEN ARRANGED WITH SOME CARE TO KEEP COGEMA IN THE DARK CONOCO AND GON OFFICIALS FEARED THAT INFORMING COGEMA EARLY ON WOULD BRING HOWLS OF FRENCH PROTEST THAT MIGHT AT WORST JEOPARDIZE TRIP AND AT BEST REQUIRE UNDESIRE MOTIFICATIONS (A COGEMA TAG-A-LONG, PERHAPS) THAT COULD UNDERMINE TRIPS USEFULNESS. OUTWARD LEG OF JOURNEY HAS EVEN BEEN SCHEDULED THROUGH DAKAR, NOT PARIS, TO AVOID POTENTIAL PROBLEMS.

5. FYI: COGEMA AND ONAREM HAVE AGREED TO CONOCOS REQUEST THAT A "TRUE" FEASIBILITY STUDY BE COMPLETED BEFORE HAULING OUT THE SHOVELS. CONOCO, POLITELY BILLING COGEMAS MOST RECENT EFFORT A "PRE-FEASIBILITY" STUDY, FRANKLY STATED IT DID NOT GO NEARLY FAR ENOUGH. REASIBILITY WORK, THEN IS TO BEGIN IN OCTOBER, TO BE COMPLETED IN JUNE, AND AN OPERATOR SELECTED HOPEFULLY BE DECEMBER 1979.CROCKETT

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